

April 25, 2023

Anita Lampel
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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL 12-23
The STEP Act to Ban Minor Traffic Stops in Montgomery County

TO: Council President Glass, Vice President Friedson, and members of the County Council

FROM: Anita Lampel

My name is Anita Lampel. I am a resident of Bethesda in District 1. I am submitting this testimony in support of Bill 12-23, the Safety and Traffic Equity in Policing (STEP) Act.

I thank Councilmembers Jawando and Mink for sponsoring this bill. I am a member of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation and of the Women's Democratic Club. I am submitting testimony on my own behalf today. My personal experience raising my children in a city with a racially diverse and economically deprived community where I ran a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Clinic and also testified in Court on numerous occasions has given me a perspective on what I consider to be "crimes of poverty" and how we can act to improve or worsen the lives of the poor. By a crime of poverty, I mean people who cannot pay the registration for the car because a child has been ill or their rent increased. This bill addresses crimes of poverty like broken windshields and lapsed registration. This bill also addresses "styles" which, while possibly not legal, are not in and of themselves a danger—such as an object dangling from the rear view mirror. White-appearing people with nice cars don't get the same treatment.

Police have a lot to do to investigate and prevent SERIOUS crimes. Reckless driving, driving under the influence, speeding – all these create a risk of accidents, injuries and death. These other areas could just be handled with a photograph of the license plate and a fix-it ticket mailed to the owner requiring only demonstration that the issue had been addressed with no further fine. The police would not need to pull someone over, itself a potential driving hazard and a situation which research shows causes the police officer stress,, and WASTE TIME issuing a ticket.

In police jurisdictions which are not progressive, which require ticket revenue to bolster their finances, there are speed traps and police poised to make money for the department by issuing just these kinds of tickets. Surely this is not Montgomery County. Surely Chief Jones has better ways to deploy the staff which he has stated is not sufficient to meet the needs of the population as it is.

I urge the County Council to support the STEP Act, Bill 12-23.